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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 002624

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP, EAP/MLS, EAP/MTS, EAP/RSP AND S/CT
PACOM FOR FPA HUSO

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER MARR MASS TH POL MIL

SUBJECT: THAILAND: THE ANDAMAN SEA MARITIME SECURITY INITIATIVE

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce. Reason: 1.4 (a and d)

11. (C) Post has proposed and the Royal Thai Supreme Command and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) have endorsed a U.S. funded initiative to secure Thai territorial waters in the Andaman Sea which would also provide radar coverage of the northern entrance to the Strait of Malacca. The proposed initiative would provide coverage of the entire western side of peninsular Thailand down to Sumatra. It would also give the RTN a coastal interdiction capacity, enhanced communications and, improved aerial observation radar. Properly implemented, the initiative could support key U.S. objectives including Regional Maritime Security, building an enhanced regional CT capacity, and implementing the Proliferation Security Initiative. The Embassy and JUSMAGTHAI are working with PACOM, DSCA and other Washington agencies to implement the proposal. End Summary.

IMPLEMENTING A MARITIME SECURITY CONCEPT

12. (C) The Embassy was recently asked by the Department to submit a proposal as part of the global package of programs designed to implement Section 1206 on the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006. JUSMAGTHAI, working with PACOM and colleagues in the region, has fleshed out a comprehensive initiative setting up a layered approach to assist the Thai Armed Forces secure territorial waters from transnational threats while also providing radar coverage of the northern shipping lanes feeding into the Strait of Malacca. Once implemented, Thailand could integrate its maritime security efforts with those of Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines to promote cooperative, enhanced maritime security for the region. Additionally, coverage into the Andaman Sea would allow the RTN to better engage with the Indian Navy in its nascent joint search and rescue exercise program.

PART ONE: RADAR COVERAGE

13. (C) The heart of the initiative is a high frequency radar array, possibly based at Phuket or Phang Nga, which would give radar coverage starting 25 nautical miles off shore to 200 nautical miles away. An array centered on the west coast of Thailand could reach from the Thai-Burma border to Sumatra. This large array would be paired with a series of x-band radars up and down the coast giving coverage from the shore to 40 nautical miles offshore. The two systems would be linked at a Maritime Operations Center -- similar to centers we use in the Caribbean and elsewhere -- which would provide a common operating picture for the entire western seacoast of the country. Computers at the operations center could analyze the radar information collected and note anomalies such as unauthorized boats carrying guns from Southern Thailand to Aceh, illegal fishing vessels, smugglers from Burma, or ships suspected of carrying any sort of contraband. Laptop computers on RTN vessels could also access the radar information for use in inspecting suspect vessels or searching for ships in distress. Post's proposal includes reliable pricing data and uses existing technology proven around the world. Rough order of Magnitude (ROM) cost is 13 million dollars.

PART TWO: COASTAL INTERDICTION CAPABILITY

14. (C) The RTN does not have an effective small craft interdiction capability. Post's proposal would provide the RTN with six Boston Whalers capable of quickly deploying from a number of coastal locations to inspect suspect ships or boats as they near shore for off loading. ROM for the boats and support equipment is 2 million dollars.

PART THREE: SECURE COMMUNICATIONS

15. (C) Post proposes assisting the Thai set up a secure voice, image and data link between the Maritime Operations Center and RTN Headquarters in Bangkok by using the Combined Enterprise Regional Information Exchange (CENTRIX) system. CENTRIX is proven, off-the shelf technology that already connects the U.S. military with a number of friendly nations throughout the world. CENTRIX is also being used by several

other countries in the region and the Thai system could conceivably be linked via CENTRIX with neighboring countries. ROM is 110 thousand dollars.

PART FOUR: ENHANCED AERIAL CAPABILITIES

16. (C) Post envisions providing three RTN aircraft with aircraft mounted high resolution large format forward looking infrared (FLIR) imaging. This will allow Thai aircraft to conduct detailed aerial searches independently or in cooperation with the Maritime Operations Center. ROM is 3.5 million dollars.

PART FIVE: GROUND SURVEILLANCE RADAR

17. (C) The final part of the package is to support a series of ground sensors which could assist the Royal Thai Army to intercept cargo that has already been off-loaded near the Thai border and transshipped over the border. ROM is 600 thousand dollars.

COMMENT: REAL BENEFITS FOR THE UNITED STATES AND THAILAND

18. (C) This initiative would provide the Thai with modern tools to curb gun running between the South and Aceh, thwart smuggling, protect fisheries, and rescue sailors. Used diplomatically, it has the potential to help the littoral states create a regional radar system that could cover thousands of square miles. Half the world's oil tankers and a third of the world's waterborne commerce pass through the Strait -- this initiative could be instrumental in protecting that commerce. In addition, this initiative has the potential to meet a number of other CT objectives ranging from monitoring the movements of suspected terrorists to furthering the Proliferation Security Initiative. End

Comment.

BOYCE